United Nations S/PV.5952

# Security Council

Sixty-third year

*Provisional*

**5952**nd meeting

Friday, 8 August 2008, 4.20 p.m.

New York

| | | |
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| *President*: | Mr. Grauls | (Belgium) |
| *Members*: | Burkina Faso | Mr. Tiendrébéogo |
| | China | Mr. La Yifan |
| | Costa Rica | Mr. Weisleder |
| | Croatia | Mr. Skračić |
| | France | Mr. Lacroix |
| | Indonesia | Mr. Natalegawa |
| | Italy | Mr. Mantovani |
| | Libyan Arab Jamahiriya | Mr. Ettalhi |
| | Panama | Mr. Arias |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Churkin |
| | South Africa | Ms. Qwabe |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Ms. Pierce |
| | United States of America | Mr. Khalilzad |
| | Viet Nam | Mr. Le Luong Minh |

## Agenda

The situation in Georgia

Letter dated 8 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/536)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

08-45515 (E)

*The meeting was called to order at 4.15 p.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation in Georgia**

**Letter dated 8 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/536)**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Finland and Georgia, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

*At the invitation of the President, Mr. Alasania (Georgia) took a seat at the Council table; Ms. Lintonen (Finland) took the seat reserved for her at the side of the Council Chamber.*

**The President**: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in response to a letter dated 8 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, contained in document S/2008/536.

I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

**Mr. Alasania** (Georgia): Today, for the second time, the Council is holding a special meeting to discuss the issue related to my country. Only 12 hours ago, in this Chamber, I stated that there were disturbing signs that Georgia is facing a well-calculated provocation to escalate the situation in order to justify a premeditated military intervention from the Russian Federation. That evaluation has been transformed into a brutal reality.

Allow me to update the members of the Security Council on the extremely alarming developments that are taking place in Georgia now.

This morning, the Russian Federation started a full-scale military invasion of Georgia. Here is an outline of the events that took place today, and we have provided a map for members, to vividly illustrate the places on sovereign Georgian territory that were bombed by the Russian Federation.

At 5.30 a.m., the first Russian troops entered South Ossetia through the Roki tunnel, passed Java, crossed the Gufta bridge and moved towards Tskhinvali.

At 9.45 a.m., according to witnesses from the local population, a military fighter plane dropped approximately three to five bombs near the village of Shayshvebi, 300 or 500 metres from Georgian military radar.

At 10.30 a.m., Russian Su-24 bombers bombed the village of Variani, in the Kareli district; seven civilians were injured.

At 10.50 a.m., six Su-24 bombers entered Georgian territory from the Roki pass. At 10.57 a.m., two of them dropped three bombs in Gori. One of them fell near a stadium, the second near the other slope, and the third near an artillery brigade.

At 11.45 a.m., four Su-24s entered from the direction of the Russian Federation, Kazbegi region, on the Georgian side. Two of them passed Tbilisi and made two circles around Marneuli. The other two made a circle above Gudauri.

At 11.45 a.m., the civil aviation emergency service reported that they had received signals from a crashed flying object — presumably a Russian fighter plane — near the Iuri range, 17 kilometres south of Gori.

By 12 noon, eight Georgians — six military and two civilians — had died, and 87 were injured. One military truck with ammunition was destroyed.

At 12.05 p.m., one Su-24 entered Georgian air space from Russia and remained over Tskhinvali until 12.15.

At 3.05 p.m., a Russian military plane entered Georgia from the direction of Tedzami, dropped two bombs at the Vaziani military airport and turned back.

Russian aviation also bombed the Marneuli and Bolnisi military bases. Two aircraft were destroyed on the ground. Several buildings were also destroyed, and there were casualties. At 5 p.m., the Marneuli military base was bombed for the second time, causing fatalities. At 5.35 p.m., the Marneuli military base was bombed for the third time, resulting in one dead and four injured. As a result of the three bombings, three An-2 planes and military vehicles stationed there were destroyed.

It became known to the Government of Georgia that, on 8 August 2008, a large amount of heavy military equipment and personnel belonging to the Russian Federation illegally entered the territory of Georgia through the Roki tunnel. The Russian side openly declared that the task of those military units was to support the criminal regime of Tskhinvali in the fight against the Government of Georgia. In order to justify its actions, the Russian Federation is speculating that Georgian authorities are targeting the positions of Russian peacekeepers. Nothing could be further from the truth. I can say with full responsibility that Georgian troops are not targeting peacekeepers. I want to stress that the Government's actions were taken in self-defence after repeated armed provocations and with the sole goal of protecting the civilian population and preventing further loss of life among the region's residents, who are of various ethnic backgrounds.

The world is witnessing a direct and open violation of universally recognized norms and principles of international law. Russia is openly challenging the international community and jeopardizing established international order and stability in the wider trans-Caucasus. The Russian military aggression is intended to subdue Georgia and make it give up its Euro-Atlantic aspirations, to make Georgia and the region succumb to Russian political influence and to destroy all the democratic achievements accomplished by our country and the international community in recent years.

We demand that the Russian Federation immediately terminate the aerial bombardments, immediately pull out the occupying forces and, together with the relevant international actors, negotiate a ceasefire and mechanisms to ensure lasting peace and stability in this part of Georgia. President Saakashvili is offering direct dialogue with the Russian Federation and other interested parties to seek a negotiated solution to this tragic conflict. We are grateful to the European Union, to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and to other international actors for their readiness to engage.

As we are having this discussion, the city of Tskhinvali is under heavy shelling and air bombardment from Russian military forces.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Churkin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I am compelled to state that Georgia is continuing its treacherous attack on South Ossetia. That is occurring despite the appeal of the Russian leadership for an immediate ceasefire, an end to this fratricidal conflict and a resumption of the negotiating process. This situation has become possible as a result of, inter alia, the connivance of a number of Security Council members, which blocked last night's assessment of the ongoing tragedy, provided in the document submitted by Russia.

The aggression has been carried out in violation of the fundamental principle of the Charter of the United Nations concerning the non-use of force. The 1996 Memorandum on Measures to Provide Security and Strengthen Mutual Trust between the Parties to the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict — signed by the Georgian and South Ossetian parties with the participation of not only the Russian Federation and the Republic of North Ossetia, but also the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) — as well as the basic agreement signed in 1992 between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Georgia on the principles of settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, obliged the belligerent parties to take measures to halt the military confrontation, to observe a ceasefire and to withdraw all armed units from the corridor along the line of contiguity. Under the agreement, a demilitarized zone was established.

The 1996 Memorandum states, in its paragraph 1, "The parties to the conflict shall renounce the use or threat of use of force". That document was signed by the High Representative of Georgia and the representative of the OSCE. I wish to refer to the particular political responsibility of OSCE member States to comply with the Memorandum. Georgia has used force and thus has violated the Memorandum and the demilitarized zone established under the 1992 agreement.

As all of us could see on our television screens today, Tbilisi is using heavy artillery and heavy materiel and, in essence, has launched an aggressive action against the people of South Ossetia. What is occurring is a massive bombardment of residential areas in Tskhinvali and in towns outside the South Ossetian zone of conflict. In Tskhinvali, schools, the university, the Ministry of Culture and the parliament have been set ablaze. The town where the peacekeepers have been living has been destroyed. Targeted bombing has been carried out against a Russian convoy carrying humanitarian assistance, and there are reports of ethnic cleansing in villages in South Ossetia.

The population is panicking, and there are a growing number of refugees, who are attempting to flee in order to save their lives and those of their children and other loved ones. A humanitarian catastrophe is in the making. Tbilisi is using scorched-earth tactics: a number of towns in South Ossetia have been totally destroyed. According to some reports, Georgian snipers are not allowing ambulances to go through and are preventing medical personnel from doing their life-saving work. The situation is so catastrophic that the International Committee of the Red Cross has requested a humanitarian corridor for emergency evacuation of the wounded. According to reports from the South Ossetian side, more than 1,400 people have died as a result of the fighting in Tskhinvali alone.

This cannot be described as anything other than a gross violation of international law, in particular the obligation to protect civilians from dangers related to military operations. We must not forget that, in cases not covered by international agreements carrying international humanitarian law, civilians and combatants remain under the protection and the force of the principles of international law arising from customary practices, humanitarian principles and the requirements of public awareness.

In this situation, the most vulnerable groups are children, women, the elderly and the disabled, whose lives, health and well-being are gravely threatened. Not only are Georgia's attacks against innocent civilians and its destruction of schools and hospitals gross violations of the norms of international humanitarian law; they also violate fundamental human rights.

Over the past week, the Russian Federation has continued to receive refugees from South Ossetia. However, tens of thousands of innocent civilians remain in the conflict zone. Those circumstances dictate the logic of the steps to be taken by us now. We will not allow the deaths of our compatriots to go unpunished. As Council members are aware, many of the people living in South Ossetia are citizens of the Russian Federation, and those who are guilty will be duly punished. I should also like to report that today, the President of Russia instructed the Government to take urgent measures to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and other innocent civilians in desperate situations.

All the points that I have made about what Tbilisi is doing have been reaffirmed by our often-repeated warnings to the international community: we must finally stop turning a blind eye to the massive acquisition of offensive weapons that Georgia has been carrying out over the past few years. Now we see that those weapons and the special commandos who have been trained by foreign instructors are being put to use by the Georgian leadership.

Georgia's actions have also caused casualties among Russian peacekeepers. The situation has even reached the point where peacekeepers from the Georgian side have shot at Russian peacekeepers, with whom they are mandated to carry out their peacekeeping mission in the region. Today in South Ossetia, innocent civilians, women, children and the elderly — many of whom, I repeat, are citizens of the Russian Federation — are dying. We cannot tolerate a situation in which Russian citizens and peacekeepers, who have been risking their lives for years to keep the peace in the South Ossetian conflict zone, are suffering. The firepower of tanks, military combat vehicles and helicopters is being aimed directly at peacekeepers. As a result, more than 10 peacekeepers have died, and more than 30 have been injured.

As members of the Council are aware, peacekeeping forces should not be put at risk as a result of actions by parties to an armed conflict. We believe that Georgia, having carried out this attack on Russian peacekeepers, has demonstrated blatant disregard for the norms of international law.

Now it is clear why, for many months, Georgia rejected our urgent proposal that it sign a legally binding document on the non-use of force to settle the South Ossetian conflict. Indeed, it has refused and continues to refuse to sign a similar document

regarding the Abkhaz conflict. The President of Georgia said that demanding his signature on such a document was absurd, because Georgia does not use force against its own people. Now it appears that it does. How can we not recall the responsibility to protect that we hear so much about in the United Nations?

All of this calls into question Georgia's viability as a State and its viability as responsible member of the international community. The President of the Russian Federation today unambiguously emphasized that Russia will not allow the deaths of our compatriots to go unpunished, and that the lives and dignity of our citizens, wherever they are, will be protected, in accordance with the Constitution of Russia and in accordance with the laws of the Russian Federation and international law.

We particularly regret the fact that the President of Georgia has proclaimed on television his resolve to continue what he has begun. That is all taking place not only against the backdrop of the Georgian flag but against the backdrop of the flag of the European Union as well.

We hope that our European colleagues and our American colleagues, who in recent weeks have been in active contact with us and who apparently were taking some steps to prevent this situation shifting to a hot phase, will start to understand what is going on: we hope that they will draw the right conclusions from this. We recently heard the a Georgian Government Minister, Mr. Yakobashvili, say that Russia should intervene as a real peacekeeper. Well, that is precisely what we are doing now.

I should like once again to emphasize that Russia was present and continues to be present on the territory of Georgia on an absolutely legal basis, pursuant to our peacekeeping mission in accordance with the international agreements that were reached. We continue to deem the main task here to be the maintenance of peace. Historically, Russia was the guarantor of the security of the peoples of the Caucuses, and it will remain so.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to take the floor.

**Mr. Lacroix** (France) (*spoke in French*): France greatly deplores the fact that since our meeting this morning the situation has considerably worsened. It is unacceptable to hear reports of destruction, of bombings, of general mobilizations and of foreign interventions. We have a simple message for the Ossetians, the Georgians and the Russians: there is no way out through the military option. Nothing can be gained by a fait accompli policy for either side. Such an approach is unrealistic because it will only succeed in opening deep wounds and compromise the only way out: the peaceful definition of the status of South Ossetia within the internationally recognized borders of sovereign Georgia.

Combat must stop immediately. We call on the parties to resume the path of negotiations without delay. In this regard, the European Union (EU) is in close contact with all of the protagonists in the crisis. Under the French presidency, the EU spare no efforts to pursue these discussions. It has been decided that Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe envoys as well as envoys from the European Union and the United States will go to Georgia to attain a ceasefire as soon as possible. We call upon the parties to cooperate fully with them to arrive at a lasting solution.

Finally, the fighting of recent days has dozens of deaths, hundreds of wounded and thousands of refugees and displaced persons. Everything possible must be done to help those who have fled their homes find shelter, receive care and return quickly to their homes. We cannot add to the tragic nature of this fighting by creating a humanitarian tragedy. It is the responsibility of the Security Council to ensure that that does not happen.

**Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom): We expressed our concerns last night when we met on this same subject, and those concerns have only increased today with the disturbing news of an escalation in the fighting and of further casualties, including those involving civilians. The situation on the ground in unclear, but it is nevertheless dangerous and volatile. Among the events of today, we have seen reports of the arrival of armed personnel from other regions, reports of the bombardment of Georgian positions elsewhere on Georgian territory by Russian fighter-bombers and reports of the passage of ground forces from Russia through the Roki tunnel. The fighting continues, and it

is a threat to peace and security in the region and beyond.

We support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and I would like to take this opportunity to call on all members of the Security Council and other colleagues to reaffirm that. I would also like to take the opportunity to reiterate calls for a ceasefire and for withdrawal. We look to the Georgians, the Russians, the South Ossetians and other fighters to desist from violence and to use all means to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers and of civilians.

Humanitarian assistance cannot be used as a pretext for the presence of non-Georgian troops, and a return to the status quo ante, which is obviously desirable, must be such that it too is effective on non-Georgian as well as Georgian forces. We also call for international engagement in a South Ossetian peace process.

My Government is pleased to support the efforts outlined by the representative of France, speaking for the European Union, setting forth what is happening on mediation from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union, and I commend those efforts to the Security Council. We will continue to support them.

**Mr. La Yifan** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China listened carefully to the statements made by Ambassador Alasania of Georgia and Ambassador Churkin of the Russian Federation. The current situation in South Ossetia, Georgia, is very worrisome. China is gravely concerned about the military conflict in the region. It is urgent that the parties achieve an immediate ceasefire and refrain from any actions that might escalate tensions. The parties to the conflict should immediately resume dialogue and should peacefully settle their dispute.

**Mr. Mantovani** (Italy): We understand that the situation on the ground has considerably worsened since our meeting last night. As indicated a few hours ago in an official statement, the Italian authorities are following with deep concern the crisis situation in the Georgian region of South Ossetia in close coordination with ours European partners and other allies.

We call on all parties to immediately cease all acts of violence and to ensure a lasting cessation of hostilities. We strongly encourage the resumption of negotiations in order to achieve a political solution to the issue respecting the sovereignty and territory integrity of Georgia. We deplore the fact that not only does the Olympic Truce remain unheeded, but so did the appeals made yesterday by several actors, including the Secretary-General and many members of the Security Council.

Reportedly, the situation has indeed deteriorated, and the crisis has broadened. We are seriously concerned at the reports of high numbers of casualties, including among civilians and peacekeepers. We have also learned with deep concern about the displacements of population. We call for full respect for international humanitarian law by all parties, including in the area of the protection of civilians. Humanitarian access must be granted fully and immediately.

We appreciate all the diplomatic efforts being undertaken at all levels to defuse the crisis, with particular mention of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United States and the European Union, which are sending envoys to the area. We reiterate our full support for the OSCE mission to Georgia and condemn the shelling of its premises. The parties must lend their full cooperation to the mission.

**Mr. Skračić** (Croatia): Croatia would like to reiterate the grave concerns that it expressed last night at the meeting on Georgia with respect to the developments in that country. News agencies have given us reports of heavy fighting between Georgian armed forces and the forces of the Georgian region of South Ossetia, as well as Russian armed forces and peacekeepers near the regional capital of Tskhinvali.

We have taken note, with extreme concern, of reports from both the news media and the Georgian side that Russian armed forces, reinforced with tanks and other military equipment, have crossed into the Georgian territory of South Ossetia, and possibly elsewhere. Although we understand and welcome the Russians' role as peacekeepers and their call for a cessation of hostilities and a return to diplomacy, that cannot be a justification for the violation of Georgia's territory, integrity and sovereignty.

Croatia is particularly concerned by some statements coming from authorities in the region on the possibility of an outbreak of open war between Georgia and Russia. Public statements that Russia must protect the life and dignity of Russian citizens wherever they are can have far-reaching ramifications not limited to

the present conflict. Moreover, we know that there is an increasing number of casualties on all sides, including members of Georgia's armed forces and Russian peacekeepers, as well as civilians in and around the conflict zone.

Croatia strongly believes that the sides should promptly agree to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and refrain from further acts of provocation, to be followed by a return to the negotiating table. In that regard, Croatia supports the efforts of the European Union, announced on 8 August 2008, to establish an immediate ceasefire in the conflict zone, as well as the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and others to that same end. We support the ongoing activities of the OSCE in that region of Georgia, including, if appropriate, as a possible mediator between the sides.

Let me conclude, as some other delegations did at last night's meeting on this subject, and as was also expressed by the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly, that Croatia would welcome the observance of the Olympic Truce by all sides, as was urged in the consensus General Assembly resolution 62/4 of October 2007.

**Ms. Qwabe** (South Africa): South Africa is deeply concerned by the developments over the past few days, which have seen the breakdown of negotiations and an escalation of violence between Georgia and South Ossetia. Those developments have a destabilizing impact on the region and have contributed to the deterioration of relations between Georgia and the Russian Federation.

South Africa denounces the use of force and urges all parties to the conflict to cease hostilities and commence negotiations without delay. It is necessary to find a solution to this long-standing dispute in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, including the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

**Mr. Khalilzad** (United States of America): The United States is deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation and the resort to violence in the South Ossetia region of Georgia that has taken place over the past several days. The underlying problems in the South Ossetia region have a long history and need to be addressed through appropriate diplomatic and political channels.

However, the situation has seen an even more dangerous downturn with the introduction of additional Russian forces into South Ossetia and with Russian air and missile attacks against Georgia. That raises serious concerns about the commitment of Russia to respect Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as questions about ultimate Russian intentions and objectives. We are profoundly troubled by these developments, and we regret the resulting loss of life and numerous casualties among innocent civilians.

We call on Russia to cease attacks on Georgia by aircraft and missiles, to respect Georgia's territorial integrity and to withdraw its ground combat forces from Georgian soil. The violence that has taken place must stop in order to avert further escalation and loss of life in Georgia — escalation of a conflict that affects not only Georgia but the wider region. What has been happening in the past days in Georgia clearly poses a threat to international peace and security that affects all of us around this table.

For those reasons, the United States calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities by all parties to avert further risk of escalation and to stop the suffering for the people of the region. That cessation should lead to a restoration of the status quo ante by all concerned.

My Government is working actively with others to secure a ceasefire. We also support international mediation to calm the situation. We seek Russia's support for these efforts. We call on the parties to show the utmost restraint and to refrain from actions that would further inflame the situation. We also call on all parties to facilitate access for humanitarian assistance.

Let me close by reiterating a fundamental tenet of this Council's engagement on issues that affect Georgia: support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

**Mr. Natalegawa** (Indonesia): Since the Council last convened, in the early hours of this morning, developments in South Ossetia, Georgia, have not turned for the better. On the contrary, as we feared, the international community is witnessing a further escalation of violence and a serious deterioration of the security situation. The attendant humanitarian consequences, as we also anticipated, are unfortunately becoming evident.

We very much regret that the Council missed an opportunity to pronounce itself clearly and with a

single voice on this unfolding grave situation earlier this morning. We must not miss that opportunity again. It is essential that we express our deep concern at the escalation of violence in South Ossetia, Georgia. It is vital that the Council call on all the parties to cease hostilities, de-escalate tensions and demonstrate a preference to resolve the dispute through dialogue and negotiations rather than through the use of arms. The stakes are clearly enormous: peace and stability in the region and, not least, the safety and well-being of vulnerable civilians.

We call on all conflicting parties to exert extra efforts to protect civilians and spare them from the harm of armed violence and, thus, avert the outbreak of a humanitarian crisis. In short, it is incumbent upon the Council to mobilize its positive and collective power of persuasion and to encourage all the parties to exercise restraint and resume negotiations. That ought to come sooner rather than later.

**Mr. Le Luong Minh** (Viet Nam): We regret that following the emergency meeting of the Security Council earlier today, the intense fighting in the South Ossetian conflict zone is escalating to a new level. My delegation once again calls upon the parties to exercise restraint, renounce the use of force and expeditiously resume direct talks to end the hostilities.

We commend and support the international efforts to help defuse the situation, restart peace talks and facilitate the rehabilitation process. We will continue to work with the other Council members to ensure that the Council responds in a timely way to the current dramatic developments in the South Ossetian zone of conflict, with a view to de-escalating tension and bringing the parties to the negotiating table.

**Mr. Ettalhi** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): What we have heard at this meeting from the representatives of the Russian Federation and of Georgia clearly demonstrates the deterioration of the situation and its serious implications for international peace and security. My country wishes to express its deepest regret at the outbreak of violence in the region. We particularly regret the large number of casualties among civilians and peacekeepers.

We call for an immediate ceasefire and a return to the pre-conflict situation. We call for peaceful negotiations and an end to provocation. We express the hope that the Security Council will stand up and send a strong message commensurate with the gravity of the situation that has exploded in the region.

**Mr. Weisleder** (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is extremely concerned about the serious events that have been taking place in Georgia since yesterday. In particular we regret the harm caused to innocent civilians. We call on all parties to halt military action and declare a simultaneous, immediate and permanent cessation of hostilities. We call upon the parties to resume their contacts and their political negotiations with a view to finding a settlement of their dispute and of any conflict between them, without preconditions. We reaffirm our support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. We urge the parties to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance to all who have been affected, wherever they may be on Georgian territory.

**Mr. Arias** (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like other delegations that have taken the floor, the delegation of Panama is concerned at the situation of violence prevailing in South Ossetia and other regions that are part of Georgia.

But of greatest concern is the fact that the Security Council has been unable to reach agreement and understanding regarding questions of fact. The versions offered today of events in South Ossetia are considerably divergent, but they have both been accepted by the Council. Nonetheless, along with others, Panama appeals for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a return to the status quo ante in order to facilitate peaceful negotiations.

**Mr. Tiendrébéogo** (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Burkina Faso is deeply concerned at the escalation of violence in South Ossetia, which has already claimed numerous victims. We urgently appeal to the parties to observe an immediate cessation of hostilities. We urge them to favour dialogue in order to reach a negotiated settlement of their dispute, and we encourage the mediation efforts that are under way.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Belgium.

Belgium voices its grave concern at the tension now reigning in South Ossetia, Georgia, which has already claimed numerous lives and caused a great number of injuries. In view of this very serious deterioration of the situation in the region, including in

the humanitarian area, Belgium urges all parties concerned to halt military operations and display moderation. We appeal to the parties to agree to an immediate, unconditional ceasefire and to work, with the assistance of the international community, to speedily resume their dialogue.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

**Ms. Lintonen** (Finland): I take the floor as representative of the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The Chairman-in-Office has expressed grave concern about the deterioration of the situation in the South Ossetia region of Georgia. The OSCE fully supports the territorial integrity of Georgia. We urge an end to all violence and military action. Any further escalation of the situation would have a devastating impact on the region, as well as on international peace and security. We urge the Georgians, South Ossetians and Russians to cease fire, end military action and stop further escalation.

We are extremely concerned about the reports of movements of heavy weapons in the area. We are seriously concerned at and deplore the loss of life. We call on all parties to prevent further civilian casualties.

The OSCE chairmanship has reacted to the situation in the following ways. The Chairman-in-Office, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, is in constant contact with the parties to the conflict and other international actors and has issued a statement calling for an immediate halt of military action and the re-establishment of contacts between the parties. The chairmanship convened an extraordinary OSCE Permanent Council meeting in Vienna earlier today. The OSCE office in Tskhinvali has been evacuated. The Special Envoy of the Chairman-in-Office is travelling to Georgia. The Chairman-in-Office is also planning to visit Georgia in the very near future.

The OSCE will continue to work intensively with all parties to defuse tensions. The OSCE's work and mandate must be respected by all parties to the conflict.

At this point I would also like to mention the importance of close coordination between the United Nations, the OSCE and the European Union in resolving the crisis.

I would like to conclude by regretting once more the outbreak of the current hostilities. We urge an immediate end to all military action and call for restraint from all parties.

**The President** (*spoke in* French): The representative of Georgia has requested the floor to make another statement, and I call on him now.

**Mr. Alasania** (Georgia): I want to express my gratitude to the members of the Security Council, who are truly concerned about the situation and the deterioration in Georgia.

First, I would like to make a few comments, on the statement of the Russian Federation's representative, and then I have to make an urgent statement because I have received a phone call from my Foreign Minister with more urgent and disturbing news.

It was appalling to hear the Russian Federation representative talking about the ethnic cleansing supposedly perpetrated by the Georgian armed forces. I want to remind the Council and Ambassador Churkin that it is the Russian Federation that really was and is supporting militarily the regime in Tskhinvali and Sukhumi, who are the perpetrators of the ethnic cleansing, which has been confirmed by numerous declarations of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and General Assembly documents.

At the same time, I was surprised that there was no mention in the Russian Federation representative's remarks of any of the bombing incidents which occurred overnight and during the day, because they are exactly the reason why we have all gathered here to elaborate on these tragic, criminal, aggressive acts from the Russian Federation side.

Now, I would like to add to my statement by saying that right now, as we speak, Russian bombers are bombing the Poti port, which is the western port of Georgia, as well as the Senaki airfield, which was bombed numerous times today. And of course, it was anticipated from my side that we would have some kind of provocation cropping up in Abkhazia as well: we are seeing the bombardment of the Kodori region of upper Abkhazia. I have been told that there is confirmed information that the bombers are in the air

and are headed in the direction of Georgia, so this is still continuing.

This is a very serious matter. I understand that the Russian Federation is a permanent member of the Security Council, but the facts that I presented to Council members today and credible media reports — not the reports of the propaganda media of the Russian Federation, which use exactly the wording that is familiar from that representative's remarks, but credible reports — are saying that we are at war. I understand that the Russian Federation is a permanent member. It is very hard to counter or oppose a permanent member in the Security Council. But what I ask of the Council is a very solid statement to the Government of the Russian Federation, as well as to the opposing parties, that these kinds of actions should stop. The bombardment of the sovereign territory of Georgia should stop, and we call for an immediate ceasefire. I truly hope that most, if not all, Council members will agree with this and will make judgements based on the information that was produced today by the Georgian side and by members of the Security Council.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Georgia for his declaration. The representative of the Russian Federation has requested the floor to make another statement, and I call on him.

**Mr. Churkin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Permanent Representative of Georgia has said that he is surprised that in my statement I used the words "ethnic cleansing". How else can we describe it when during the course of today a town of 70,000 inhabitants is being destroyed? What else can we call it when hospitals, schools and residential areas are being destroyed, when scores of thousands of refugees are leaving the Republic? How can you describe these actions by a country that is trying to operate by using the language of international law and that is appealing to the international community to protect its interests?

I believe that it would be very difficult to get to the bottom of the details described by the representative of Georgia and that it is quite difficult to take anything that he has said on trust. What is the real worth of the slander that the Georgian armed forces are not targeting Russian peacekeepers, when we know very well that quite the reverse is the case. When the headquarters of the Russian peacekeepers was directly targeted, people were killed, and people were wounded in that attack. How can you unleash such slaughter, such carnage, on a territory which is considered to be the territory of Georgia, and then pretend to be offended when you hear this perfectly clear term that describes the actions by the Georgian side in this situation?

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of Georgia has asked for the floor to make further statement, and I call on him now.

**Mr. Alasania** (Georgia): In response, when I made a statement that Georgian authorities never targeted the Russian Federation's peacekeepers, that means that we never targeted the peacekeepers. Those who were targeted were mercenaries from the Russian Federation and also those who were actually shooting at and shelling Georgian positions and the Georgian civilian population. But, as I mentioned, it is true — and members can verify this through their own sources back in Georgia — that Georgia never targeted the peacekeepers on the ground.

Now, in terms of ethnic cleansing, yes, I was appalled — and again, I want to reiterate that we do not want to go into too many details today because there is an urgent need to stop the violence today — at the Russian Federation President's decisions to legitimize the separatist regimes, who were perpetrators of ethnic cleansing. This is a matter of great concern, and it has been discussed numerous times at the Security Council. Unfortunately, there was a strong statement from Security Council members, but the decision was never reversed. We are seeing today the methodical occupation and invasion of Georgian territory, which has occurred over these past months. We have to react, together with the Security Council. As I mentioned, Georgia stands ready to cooperate when the international community, international observers, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union — and the United Nations, of course — to facilitate this kind of ceasefire and to be bound by it.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of the United States has asked for the floor to make another statement, and I call on him now.

**Mr. Khalilzad** (United States of America): I take the floor to highlight one issue. I think almost everyone who has spoken this afternoon has highlighted the importance of ceasing the fighting — of a ceasefire. I

note that the representative of Georgia has said that Georgia is ready to accept a ceasefire, but my Russian colleague's statement was silent on the issue of the need for an immediate end to the violence and for accepting a ceasefire. I believe that it is very important that the message go out, loud and clear from here, that there has to be a ceasefire. We understand that there are issues separating the parties, and we want those issues to be addressed. But what is needed is an end to the violence.

Therefore, there has to be a cessation of violence, and we urge the Russian Federation to join what appears to be a consensus for a cessation of violence — for a ceasefire. I believe that this is something that we can all come together on. It would send the right message to the people of Georgia and would put us on the path to dealing with the issues, which several colleagues — almost everyone, including our Russian colleague — have raised and that need to be addressed.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked make further statement, and I give him the floor.

**Mr. Churkin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Who would object to a ceasefire? Who would object to peace? Of course, peace is better than war. But unfortunately, in this kind of situation, you cannot just get away with slogans. You need a serious political analysis of the situation. You not only need an appeal to cease combat; you need to state that agreements have been violated, agreements that have maintained the peace in that conflict area over the past 14 years. You need demands to be met and the situation returned to that which existed before the start of Tbilisi's aggressive actions against South Ossetia. That would be a serious political approach. But simply to present fine slogans in these meetings and then do everything you can to nod indulgently at Tbilisi is not the way that will lead to a settlement of this very acute, very dangerous conflict situation.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of Georgia has asked for the floor to make a further statement, and I call on him now.

**Mr. Alasania** (Georgia): First of all, I would like to address one question to my colleague, Ambassador Churkin: Are you ready to stop the fighter jets that are in the air, which will soon be bombing my comrades in Georgia?

What will the Security Council do about this now? How are we going to address this? We all know that those bombers are in the air and that they are about to bomb the civilian population indiscriminately, as they have been doing for an entire 24 hours. What are we going to do? That is my question to Council members.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to make a further statement, and I now give him the floor.

**Mr. Churkin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Of course, this meeting of the Security Council is not the best place for an exchange of questions and answers between one Permanent Representative and another, but there is an answer to that question.

For a start, the Georgian authorities could state that they intend, in the future, to abide by the agreements that, I repeat, have maintained peace in that conflict zone for 14 years. For a start, they could say that they do intend to go back to the status quo ante as it was before the military action began. For a start — and I am not talking about more serious responsibilities they bear — they could apologize very seriously for the irresponsible and hasty actions taken by the Georgian authorities, which have caused many thousands of people to be killed and have caused the capital of South Ossetia to be destroyed in the past 24 hours. That would be a start. We could then continue the discussion, after that.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

*The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.*